

Environmental Action Committee (EAC) Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2019

EAC Members Present: Chris Samoiloff (CS), Claire Golding (CG), Phil Gott (PG), Phoebe Moore (PM), Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH)

Also Present: Charlie Cary, Sherry Patch (TM)

Meeting called to order: 7:05 pm

Public comment:

- TM attended meeting “to listen and learn.”
- Charlie Cary attended to talk about wood as a heat source, as relevant to the Environmental Action Plan (EAP). Charlie works for an industrial wood energy company – wood burning systems. Charlie discussed with EAC the benefits of wood waste as a fuel source. He explained that burning wood emits CO₂, but when wood decomposes it also releases CO₂ and when there is anaerobic decomposition of the wood, methane gases are released (which is 30x more powerful a greenhouse gas than CO₂). Charlie said there is a potential opportunity to collect and burn waste from municipalities that produce wood from trimming and felling trees, construction waste, etc. Instead of letting this wood rot, he believes it should be collected and burned to produce heat for municipal, school, or other buildings. He said, as a result, the state of MA last year tried to reduce the thermal efficiency regulations for wood energy facilities because there is over a million tons of wood residue coming out of the urban sector. Charlie also noted the issue of forest management – wildlands and woodlands – and that it costs money to maintain land. He said having woodlands that can be harvested creates incentives for people to keep land as forest. He said that, at the moment, there is not much forest management going on in MA because there are no markets for this low grade material. Charlie wants everyone to start thinking about what is the highest and best use for this material that is being generated on an annual basis. (Residue coming out of forest products industry + residue from municipalities + forest management.) He noted that wood is cheaper than oil or propane for equivalent heat output. He also noted that biomass appliances are now emitting much less in terms of particular emissions and this is much improved from the 80s and 90s.
 - o CS mentioned that wood is good for farming (e.g. around fruit trees) and it can replenish the soil if it is left on the ground. Charlie agreed but noted that he is focusing on wood that cannot be left where it is – e.g. municipal waste.
 - o CG asked Charlie about how this might be best applied to Princeton – Town and residents. E.g. people throw away a lot of wood in dumpsters when doing construction. We have line clearing, road clearing and hazard clearing in Princeton, DPW, tree warden, PMLD and they all cut trees. Charlie is hoping that municipalities will put it into a “stump dump.”
- Charlie would like to quantify the sources of wood waste in town, and put numbers to the possible value. He said there should be an opportunity in town to use it as fuel.

- PG clarified that the recommendation would be to assess the amount of waste wood generated in Princeton and then assess best use of this waste wood.
- Charlie suggested improving awareness around tree cutting that is happening and that we are paying to get rid of it as a municipality. PG brought up that part of Green Communities is a need for some industrial/commercial land zoned where a “green activity” is “as of right” and perhaps a recommendation might be made around this. Mulch was discussed as another option for use of tree waste – e.g. maybe a community pile for Princeton. This would avoid having to truck it.
- The EAC discussed big energy users in the area and whether wood might be a possible heating or energy source for them (e.g. schools, businesses, etc.).
- PG asked if he could volunteer to work with Charlie to make a recommendation for the EAP.
 - PG asked what the homeowners can do in Princeton. Charlie suggested that they take advantage of state/DOER swap-out program to put in more efficient stoves etc. CS mentioned getting a rebate for fireplace blower. **Motion to support PG to work with Charlie to edit the EAP – second by CG. Vote 5-0.** EAC may also consider adding the state rebates into the recommendations for the EAP.
- The EAC also invited Charlie to become an EAC member.

Committee discussed EAC priorities including Green Communities and how to best get the Selectboard (SB) in support. EAC will present to SB next week.

PMLD update – see attached for PG’s update. EAP well-received so far. CBH noted that may require updates to “current situation” sections of the EAP.

Public forum report. CG noted this meeting was lightly attended and resulted in no edits to the EAP. We did get some feedback that suggested we need to make sure we are carefully explaining “as-of-right” concepts for Town Meeting because there were some concerns about what this might mean. CBH may do some public information sharing about Green Communities via local media.

Next steps –

- *Visibility and good will within community.*
 - Selectboard may be interested in having EAC priority action items that first build up trust in the community.
 - Green Communities will bring in \$ to the Town but requires a Town Meeting vote.
 - The other opportunity is the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program which would also bring in resources/money and does not require a Town Meeting vote. It requires time: 40 person hours or less total from different department heads, where we identify areas where the Town is vulnerable to climate related disasters, for example: forest fires, trees dying, culverts/flooding.

- TM mentioned this was just done in Sunderland; they got a \$30K grant. TM agreed to share the MVP grant they did for Sunderland. TM noted that Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was very helpful with Hardwick – they will help with zoning, mapping, energy reduction plan. PG asked about the cost of this; answer is not clear yet. TM also noted Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FEMA) and possibility of doing that together with MVP.
 - Grant deadline closes 1/15 but may run out before then. CBH thinks this may be too short a deadline to get something together.
 - PG noted that the road advisory commission supports MVP.
 - EAP discussed whether we have bandwidth to do MVP and Green Communities at same time. EAC considered dividing the committee members with some working on each.
 - CBH was on board with breaking into smaller group, feels it makes sense to try. For Green Communities, informing the public will be crucial.
 - **PM: Motion to modify the letter to the SB about priorities to include MVP grant as a priority.** PG second. Vote: 5-0.
 - CBH and CG will get this to Claire in the next couple of days.
 - **PG: Motion to authorize PG and CBH to create a presentation plan for the Selectboard meeting.** CG second. Vote: 5-0. Rick Gardner also had noted that Open Space might be helpful with the as-of-right piece for Green Communities.
 - CBH asked EAC members about the function of the 10/28 list of priorities.
 - CS would like to get Selectboard blessing to start communicating with the Town as a board.
 - TM mentioned communicating in census mailing.
 - EAC agreed to ask Selectboard to approve our priorities and agree that we can move forward, and we will begin SB presentation with these objectives and notify them of 12/31 date for EAP.
 - CS thought we could start doing communication to build goodwill. PM agreed.
- *EAP*
 - EAC discussed deadline for finalizing EAP and disseminating it, as well as recommendation of regular updates to the EAP. CBH recommended we finalize by end of year.
 - **PM: Motion to finalize EAP by 12/31/2019. CS second.** Vote: 5-0.
- *Communications.*
 - CG suggested EAC needs to get down to communications and establish a plan for that so that we have pieces we are moving forward on.

- CS suggested blog/website for communications – something we can link to Town website but manage ourselves.
- TM mentioned YouTube as possible place to share information.
- CS reported that second Monday of the month is the deadline for submissions to Redemption Rock news. CS reached out to editor to see about a regular item. They do not publish Jan-Mar.
- EAC discussed reaching out to The Landmark and send information blogs to both publications as well as Town news and our website.
- TM suggested possibly utilizing the school listserv for communications.
- EAC members discussed frequency of information sharing communications. Possibly once per month. Action: CS will make a topic list and bring to next meeting.

Next meetings 11/6 and 11/18. Claire away 11/1 - 11/23. CBH will take chair responsibilities. PG will be out 11/6.

Town-wide clean-up will likely be in April and EAC discussion of this will be tabled until December.

Review and Approve Meeting Minutes for EAC Sept 16 meeting

Motion to approve with one minor typo edit: CG; 2d: CS Approved 3-0. (PM and PG abstained because they were not present at 9/16/19 meeting).

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Public comment
- Review and approve minutes
- Results of SB meeting
- Updates to EAP
- EAP next steps
- Communications – set schedule

Move to adjourn CG, second CBH. Vote: 5-0. Adjourned at 8:55 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Phoebe Moore

ATTACHMENT: Meeting Report
PMLD Board of Commissioners
October 16, 2019

This report provides a summary of This PMLD meeting on points relevant to the Princeton EAC.

Energy Consumption January through September, 2019

PMLD purchased 11.7 million kWh from Nextera

Total Solar produced by Princeton sources: 156,000 kWh of which 76,000 was purchased by PMLD. The balance was not paid for as installations were post-net metering.

Energy Saving Incentives:

Heat Pumps: January through August, 13 PMLD customers purchased heat pumps.
PMLD has paid out \$4,000 out of the \$10,000 allocated for heat pump incentives.

EV chargers: 3 Princeton homes have installed EV chargers. These are MWEC controlled devices that can be turned off during times of peak demand (usually 5 to 9 PM)

Rebates: PMLD has paid out about \$27,000 for HELPS rebates for various devices during the period January through September 2019

For 2020 Helps will incentivize:

- Wifi Thermostats
- Energy Star rebates for appliances
- Hi efficiency heat pumps
- Home energy tests

Connected Home: New for 2020 will be incentives for the "Connected Home." That is a home that has embedded wifi systems controlled by MWEC:

- Thermostats
- Hot Water heaters
- EV charger
- Heat pump

Infrastructure:

PMLD is upgrading in-town power transmission lines to new conductors and higher voltages (presumably to reduce transmission losses and enable higher loads to be carried)

Transformers are being upgraded where added loads such as for EV chargers are anticipated.

Solar "Farms"

In a discussion of Green Communities, Phil Gott brought to the attention of the Commissioners the prerequisite “as-of-right” siting for Green operations. The potential of a solar farm was discussed and the suitability, or lack thereof, of Princeton as a location for a major power producer. Apparently the power transmission lines that feed the town are close to capacity already. This means that a major investment in new or upgraded power transmission lines would be needed for any power production facility that produced more power than Princeton could consume, making a large scale commercial solar farm an unlikely use for such a site.

RECS

To sell or retire wind farm RECS for 2020 was discussed. It was decided to sell the RECS instead of retire them. This is because the income from the RECS is needed to avoid increased electric rates. Maintenance costs for the turbines will increase due to the new Union rules prohibiting PMLD linemen from working on the turbines. (PMLD will be contracting out the maintenance and repair of the turbines and this will add costs that can be mitigated by RECS income.)

Environmental Action Plan

The availability of the draft EAP was brought to the attention of the commissioners. All had seen it but not read it in detail. EAC was complimented for a comprehensive report. Phil Gott briefly discussed the electric energy related content, noting that PMLD was already underway with several of the EAP recommendations, which is good news! As reported above, the impact of the green communities “as-of-right” zoning overlay was discussed.

Respectfully submitted by Philip Gott

DISCLAIMER:

These notes have not been reviewed by any other attendee. Any differences between these notes and the actual minutes of PMLD are unintentional and my mistake. In the event of discrepancies, the actual minutes should be referenced and considered accurate.